

## Responsible students should pitch in to improve campus

Almost every student at Texas A&M, no matter how filled with the Aggie Spirit they are, can think of something they'd like to see change about the University. But changing things here is sometimes like knocking your head up against a brick wall. Not only is it tough trying to change attitudes at a school so steeped in tradition, but mere bureaucracy is enough to put off a lot of students who would like to see things improved.

So, as responsible students, it's time that we made the best of the things we can improve without going through "the system." We can make some changes in our habits that will not only improve the conditions for A&M students, but also improve the way students are perceived by the administration and by the outside world in general, which would, in turn, make it a bit easier to go to those people when we want "big" improvements.

I'm not talking about getting together to build a library the same way we build bonfire. I mean simple things. Really simple things. For example:

- **Pick up trash.** Sure, a responsible student doesn't throw their trash on the ground. But they also try to pick up the trash irresponsible people did throw on the ground.

This includes not just letting those little inserts that sometimes fall out of The Battalion just lie there and blow all over campus, and, of course, that incredible silly tradition some dorm dwellers seem to have of throwing all their trash out of their windows onto the ground when they move out.

- **Pull down old notices and flyers.** People who put up flyers should come around after their event is over and take them down. If you live in a dorm or spend a lot of time in a certain building, take the time to stop and check the bulletin boards and walls to see if any notices are old, and throw them away.

Getting rid of the old notices not only makes things look a lot less tacky, but also makes it easier for people to notice relevant flyers.

- **Recycle.** A&M as a whole does not have a recycling program yet. But lots of campus groups do. Take time to hang on to your can until you can find a recycling bin.

And if you live in a dorm or are a member of an on-campus organization or you work in an office, it's easy to start a mini-recycling program.

The Batt staff, for example, saves aluminum cans in a big barrel. Get in touch with the Texas Environmental Action Coalition for a list of recycling centers and take turns dropping off your glass, plastics, computer paper, aluminum cans or whatever recyclables you produce.

- **Carpool.** Off-campus students have been bitching for a long time about the lack of parking, but, so far, they've

gained little ground.

Bikes can be the answer for some students, but others live so far away from campus that it's just not feasible. Carpooling is feasible, however, and could make a visible improvement in the parking situation.

And go beyond just asking your friends or coworkers. See if you can set up a bulletin board for people who are seeking or offering regular rides in your apartment complex. Efficient carpooling could prove to the people who hiked up bus fares that their rides are replaceable if the price is too high.

- **Think about safety.** Don't jog alone at night wearing earphones. Don't leave your dorm rooms unlocked. Don't throw your backpacks on a big pile on a table in Sbis and expect it to be there when you get back. Lock your bike. Use the escorts and buses provided by campus organizations when you cross campus at night. Travel in packs. Double date. Make sure your roommate or someone knows where you are. Report crime.

You know — just use some common sense. It'll give the police less to do.

- **Be nice to the visitors.** Remember that visitors don't necessarily know about our traditions, and it's rude to yell at someone just because he doesn't know what's going on.

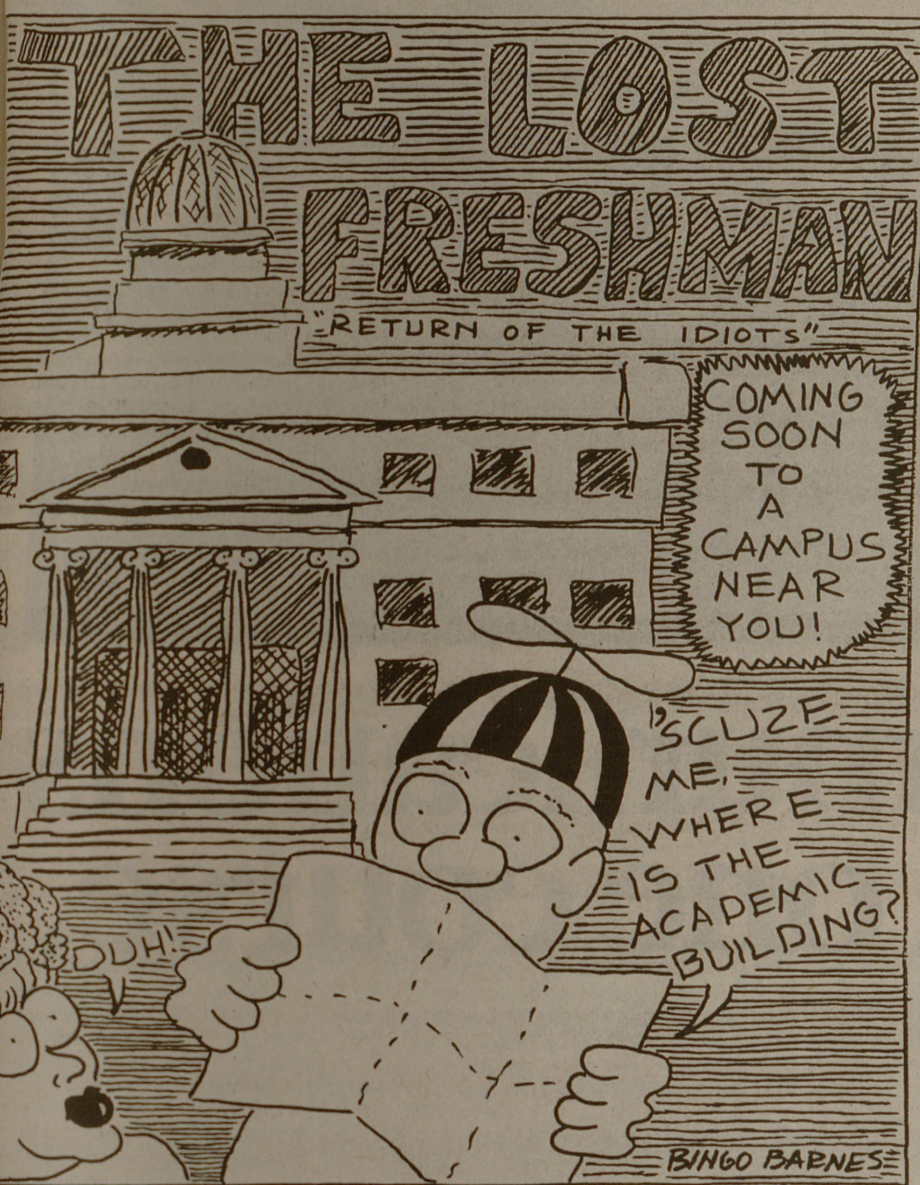
You can scream at somebody to "uncover," but unless they've been told, they just don't know what you're talking about.

Tell them nicely that the grass at the Memorial Student Center is part of a war memorial and ask them politely not to walk on it — that sort of thing. Chances are, they'll be cool about it, even if they're an enemy from the other team's school.

- **Don't go out of your way to cost Texas A&M money.** Don't soap the fountains or drive your cars where you're not supposed to or launch water balloons through windows or paint obscenities on your rival dorm's walls. Don't take desks and ashtrays just because they're not nailed down. This kind of thing just seems like harmless juvenile stuff after six or seven beers, but it adds up to big bucks.

Anyway, you get the idea. There are a lot of things you can do to make A&M a little nicer place to live even if you're not the type of person who would go to a Board of Regents meeting or file complaints with 17 different people.

So get out there, carpool, recycle, and have a great semester.



## Editor gives explanation of Opinion Page sections

"Accustom yourself to not knowing what your opinions are 'til you have blurted them out, and thus find out what they are."  
-John Jay Chapman

Welcome to Opinion Page '91. To all those new to The Battalion, A&M or just as a refresher course, let's have a short wrap session.

### How to submit a letter to the editor:

First, write a letter. The Opinion Page is the students' forum. A letter can be up to 300 words in length or about a page and a half, typewritten and single spaced. Anything longer is considered a reader's opinion (explained later).

You can bring your letter by room 113 Reed McDonald, send it to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or fax it to 845-5408. Be sure to include your name, class year (numbers like '91-Whoop!), major, student ID number and a daytime phone number.

If you bring your letter to The Batt, make sure to bring your A&M ID, or if that's not possible, your driver's license. If you mail your letter, expect a call from us to verify that you are who you say you are.

Our policy says that all letters must be signed by one or more individuals. No group can take responsibility for one letter. If a long list of signatures is given, we will print the first signature and indicate how many others signed the letter.

No anonymous letters will be accepted. However, under very special circum-

stances, names may be omitted when the letter is printed. There must be a name printed with each letter.

We edit for grammar, spelling, length and style. We will not, however, change the essence of your letter.

Please don't expect your letter to be printed the same day you submit it. It may take us a few days to get your letter typed into our computer system a verify it and find room for it on the page. There is no guarantee that

### Reader's Opinions:

Any reader can submit a column for Reader's Opinion. Anything that is submitted that's too long for Mail Call can end up being a Reader's Opinion column.

Your Reader's Opinion will be edited just like a letter to the editor, plus your classification (that's the word, like "senior").

### Columns vs. editorials:

Editorials are the opinion of The Battalion editorial board. It's a little different this year. Not all editors are included in the vote on editorials. The editorials are periodically written and agreed upon by a voluntary group of editors who represent The Battalion. They are boxed and have "Editorial" printed at the top. They will usually appear in the top left corner of the opinion page.

Columns are the opinion of the individual columnists, not the whole Battalion. The Battalion does not regulate the topics or viewpoints of our columnists.

If you have any questions about the opinion page or anything in The Battalion, the phone numbers of the editors are listed in the staff box on page 2. Please direct any advertising questions to the advertising department at 845-2696.

Carrie Cavalier

Cavalier is a senior psychology major.

Dwayne Purvis

Purvis is a sophomore petroleum engineering major.

### Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.

All letters to the editor are welcome. Written letters must be signed and include classification, address and daytime phone number for verification purposes.

Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee letters will appear.

Letters may be brought to 113 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.

## Consider beliefs of opposition as based on legitimate reason

Usually, when people say, "Have an open mind," they mean one of two things: Think of it my way, or don't act on what you believe.

Having an open mind, of course, is simply the willingness to examine one's own beliefs and values and to thoughtfully consider another's.

College is probably the best and most common place for such introspection and discussion. Consequently, it becomes a place for idea clashes.

Last semester, this opinion page dealt extensively with homosexuality. Some readers insisted that the Bible plainly condemns homosexuality. Others returned that the Bible should not guide everyone's life. The same arguments were often repeated, but no one seemed to listen to what the opposition had to say.

When conflicts such as this occur, one person hotly accuses the other of ignorance or bigotry or conformity. The argument continues until both people dismiss the other and his reason. Neither hears what the other has to say. Both fail to understand that each has good reason to feel as they do. Thinking they are

right, both take it upon themselves to try to change or at least educate the 'ignorant' or the 'radical.'

This scenario occurs most often in public exchanges, such as an opinion page, a campus billboard or an issue rally. People on both sides of a debate hold their positions for a reason. Both have deep-seated convictions that control which position they take.

Some convictions are based on information. Their beliefs may change with the presentation of new information.

Other issues concern convictions rooted beneath the rational mind. Public issues dealing with this type of conviction often generate ire-raising discussions. Abortion, the Bible, state lotteries and euthanasia are good examples.

These opinions are usually formed through a combination of rational thought and instinctive moral values.

Last semester I read a sign advertising an activity at a local cafe benefiting "whoever is running against Jesse Helms." Many people seem to detest Senator Helms, R-South Carolina, personally because he fights against what he considers pornographic material.

These people don't seem to realize that Helms probably has considered his position and sincerely believes he is right to crusade against pornography (or

art, whichever term you prefer).

Helms is not wrong to fight for what he believes in, yet his character falls victim to the indignation of many who think otherwise.

Martin Luther King also suffered the slings and arrows of counter-protesters more comfortable with racist ideas. In this case, most Americans have come to agree with the minority viewpoint.

Polarization does not, however, accomplish change on a personal level. Look at Gandhi or Jesus Christ, Billy Graham or John Lennon. Honest conviction, offered kindly, not self-righteousness and loud protestations, accomplish change.

Try to keep these things in mind when in a heated debate.

The common boisterous approach often turns people away before they even listen to one's justifications. It creates contempt of the person and not just the attitude or belief being argued. No one likes nor respects an arrogant and aloof adversary.

When a person presents a position — his information or conviction — understand the person has reasons behind his ideas. Then both can kindly and thoughtfully listen and discuss an issue.

After all, both sides can rest in the conviction that the truth will eventually win out.

